III

THE CONGRESS OF BERLIN

THE years which lay between the Congress of Paris and the Congress of Berlin were more crowded with great events than any twenty years in the history of the world. The two ideas of democracy and nationality had gone hand in hand during the middle years of the century. To men like Metternich they had seemed the inseparable and baneful product of the revolution. They had been glorified together, by Mazzini and Garibaldi and the men of 1848, under the name of liberty. The members of the Parliament of Frankfort of 1850 had believed in their unity, and had dreamed of an empire which was to rest upon them as upon twin foundations. But Frederick William, under the pressure of Austria and Russia, had refused a crown which was to belong to him, not "by the grace of God," but "by the will of the people," and men who hated both political and economic democracy were to seize the idea of nationality and to use it as a weapon. Kossuth and Andrassy had shown that the two ideas were not necessarily consistent when they had used the fervor of the February revolution, not so much to secure popular rights and privileges for the people of Hungary, as to increase the relative power and influence of the Magyars at the expense of the Slavs who lived with them in the valley of the middle Danube. The separation had been made complete by Bismarck, who was as patriotic as Mazzini and as reactionary as Metternich. He was at once the

heir of the liberals of 1848, and of the conservative forces which had destroyed them.

The political thought of the age had been profoundly though unconsciously affected by the idea of the survival of the fittest, which it took from its biological setting and gave a social significance. Evolution seemed a blind force which always worked through struggle and never through what has since come to be called "mutual aid." When pressed to define "the fittest," the age would have answered, "Those that survive," without realizing either the shallowness of the answer or the circle in the reasoning. It was a frank gospel of salvation to the strong and of damnation to the weak, because weakness is the self-evident proof of unfitness. Herbert Spencer was to be regarded as a profound thinker whose influence was to reappear in a positive way in Nietzsche, and negatively and more popularly in Omar Khayyam. The notions of a common humanity whose needs and aspirations must be considered, of popular rights, of international justice or morality, seemed now mere sentiment and cant. Organized efficiency within the nation, imperialism in international relations, were to be the frank outward expression of subtle and profound changes in the religious and social thought of men. Pan-Slavism, Pan-Germanism, The White Man's Burden, were to be the new cloaks for the same old selfishness and greed which had once paraded under other names; and in the name of the liberal notion of nationality, national interests were to be disregarded and popular liberties suppressed.

The Europe which turned its eyes to Berlin was a very different Europe from that which had breathed a profound sigh of relief at the end of the Crimean war. Italy had then been a hope and Germany scarcely more than an aspiration. Now Italy had gained her freedom, not as the result of any

great popular rising as Mazzini had hoped, but by the aid of foreign soldiers. Whatever gratitude she had first felt for France was dimmed and almost destroyed when Napoleon had secured first the hand of the Princess Clotilde for his cousin, and had later gained his pound of flesh in Savoy and Nice. Well might Garibaldi fulminate against the bargain which made him a man without a country, but Cavour answered that "statesmanship is the ability to discern the possible." The great Italian had died with Venice still unredeemed, and with Rome protected by the bayonets of France. The final and complete unification of Italy was to be the work, not of Napoleon or of Cavour, but of Bismarck, as a by-product of his struggle against Austria.

After the death of Cavour, the career of Bismarck was, indeed, "the history of Europe." Under him the Prussian army had been strengthened, even against the will of the Assembly, and that army had been used in three successful wars. First Denmark had been beaten and compelled to give up Schleswig-Holstein; then Austria had succumbed to the well-trained soldiers of Von Moltke, and Hanover, which since the Congress of Vienna had virtually cut Prussia off from any direct access to the sea, was swallowed bodily; and then, at length, Prussia was strong enough to fight France for Alsace and Lorraine, with their rich valleys and almost priceless coal-fields. The great indemnity of five billions of francs which the defeated country had to pay for the privilege of being beaten was at once the symbol of the completeness of the victory and the foundation of great national enterprises for Germany. In all former wars the victor had been content with either land or money. In this he demanded both, and the gains which were made so easily in 1871 became the temptation which seems the fundamental cause of the present war. In money alone Germany had

gained much more than she had spent. War seemed at once glorious and lucrative. Above all, the three southern states, which had held aloof at first, were now willing to come into the new empire, and William was proclaimed emperor in the throne-room of the French kings at Versailles. Practically from the same moment date the Third Republic in France, which rose from the ashes of the war, and the United Kingdom of Italy, with its capital at Rome. The dream of the dead Cavour was now fulfilled.

It seems entirely probable that the influence of impersonal economic forces would have brought about the unification of Germany in the course of time, without any wars at all. Maässen with his Zollverein, rather than Bismarck, was the real architect of the empire. Railroads, racial likeness, trade, were the fundamental bonds rather than the armies of Von Moltke. But Bismarck had undoubtedly hastened the process and very profoundly modified the spirit of the new empire. In that sense he might well regard himself as the father of his country.

When he was an old man, Bismarck grew reminiscent and gave to the world the two volumes of his "Reflections and Reminiscences," which proved almost as embarrassing to the Foreign Office at Berlin as the more recent reminiscences of Prince Lichnowsky. As a historical source, this book is very hard to use. There are constant veiled allusions to secret transactions which will not be fully known until the archives of the various European capitals are opened to inspection. It is, also, almost impossible to tell just where the reminiscences change into reflections of a later day. But as a mirror in which a great modern Machiavelli reveals his political opinions and motives, and as a study in diplomacy these memoirs have unrivalled interest. No one else can ever write a character sketch of the great German that may

compete with the one which he himself has written. At once his strength and his weakness lay in the fact that he could act with one single aim constantly in mind. That aim was to secure the greatness and the strength of Germany. He is the supreme embodiment of the idea of nationality at the moment when it was changing into the newer idea of imperialism. The nation must be not only strong itself, but also stronger and more powerful than any rival or combination of rivals. The petty scruples which other men felt or professed to feel, this new Jove was able to tear aside like clouds which dimmed his vision of the world. He reckoned with democracy, but did not fear it, as his predecessor Metternich had done; for he thought that the people would always accept national power and efficiency as worthy substitutes for what they thought was liberty. He introduced universal suffrage in the choice of the Reichstag, though he regarded it as a necessary evil. "I had no hesitation whatever in throwing into the frying-pan . . . the most powerful ingredient known at that time to liberty-mongers, namely, universal suffrage, so as to frighten off foreign monarchies from trying to stick a finger into our national omelette. I never doubted that the German people would be strong and clever enough to free themselves from the existing suffrage as soon as they realized that it was a harmful institution."

In diplomacy his masterpiece was the device by which he brought on the war with France at the very moment when he was best ready for it. He managed to do this in such a way that it seemed to many that France was herself the aggressor. Until the publication of his own memoirs such a notion existed widely. All doubts on the subject were cleared up when Bismarck told the story of his achievement, with all the father's pride over this child of his imagination. Let us hope that some day either Bethmann-Hollweg or William

may be equally reminiscent. Bismarck tells us that at the beginning of his career, "I took it as assured that war with France would necessarily have to be waged on the road to our further national development, . . . and that we must keep this eventuality in sight in all our domestic as well as in our foreign relations." He did keep this plan in mind through all the intervening years. Finally the throne of Spain became vacant, and Bismarck secretly worked to have a Hohenzollern prince chosen for the place. France felt that she was threatened from the south, and naturally protested. Under the influence of the Empress, she even went farther and foolishly asked a pledge that Germany should never in the future attempt to control the throne of Spain. Bismarck was delighted. War seemed about to come, and Prussia was ready. A sharp refusal to the request of France was all that was necessary to make that state seem the aggressor. But William did not want to take the risk and was really anxious for peace. He answered the French ambassador in a courteous note which would have made war impossible. This letter was the so-called Ems despatch, which was not given to the world until after the revelations of Bismarck made it necessary.

There is a wonderful picture in the "Reminiscences," subject for some future painter. He might call it, "The Founding of the German Empire." Bismarck, Von Roon, the minister of war, and Moltke were sitting waiting for the news. The king's pacific telegram was handed to Bismarck. He read it out to his two guests, whose dejection was so great that they turned away from food and drink. Bismarck seemed to think that this indicated very deep sorrow. But as the chancellor looked at the words with practised eye, he thought he saw a gleam of light. "I put a few questions to Moltke as to the extent of his confidence in the state of

our preparations." The general answered that everything was ready. "Under this conviction," Bismarck continues, "I made use of the royal authorization . . . to publish the contents of the telegram; and in the presence of my two guests, I reduced the telegram by striking out words, but without adding or altering. . . . After I had read out the concentrated edition to my two guests, Moltke remarked: 'Now it has a different ring; it sounded before like a parley; now it is like a flourish in answer to a challenge.' I went on to explain: 'If, in execution of his Majesty's order, I at once communicate this text . . . not only to the newspapers, but also by telegraph to all our embassies, it will be known in Paris before midnight, and, not only on account of its contents, but also on account of the manner of its distribution, will have the effect of a red rag upon the Gallic bull. Fight we must if we do not want to act the part of the vanquished without a battle. . . . It is important that we should be the party attacked.' This explanation brought about in the two generals a revulsion to a more joyous mood, the liveliness of which surprised me. They had suddenly recovered their pleasure in eating and drinking and spoke in a more cheerful vein. Roon said, 'Our God of old still lives and will not let us perish in disgrace.' Moltke so far relinquished his passive equanimity, that, glancing up joyously to the ceiling and abandoning his usual punctiliousness of speech, he smote his hand upon his breast and said: 'If I may but live to lead our armies into such a war, then the devil may come directly afterwards and fetch away the old carcass.' He was less robust at that time than afterwards, and doubted whether he should survive the hardships of the campaign." So, having called upon both God and the devil, this famous party adjourned. It had changed the history of the world.

At the end of the war Moltke summed up the situation in

a prophetic sentence: "We have earned in the late war respect, but hardly love. What we have gained by arms in six months, we shall have to defend by arms for fifty years."

With France defeated, it was necessary for Bismarck to consolidate his gains. He foresaw a great struggle between what he called the system of order on a monarchical basis and the social republic to which that principle might be reduced. He considered the establishment of strong royal institutions on permanent foundations in Germany, Russia, and Austria more important than any rivalry "over the fragments of nations which inhabit the Balkan peninsula." In comparison with the safety and the strength of the great monarchies, it seemed to him that "all the Balkans were not worth one Pomeranian grenadier." France was hopelessly given over to idols, and he would let her alone. He favored the establishment of a republic there, because he thought that the end of the experiment would be an anarchy entirely favorable to Germany. Her friendship he could never hope to secure. Her weakness would be the best safeguard. Austria, too, had been defeated and one might expect at first sight that she also would be an irreconcilable enemy. But she feared internal troubles even more than she hated her conquerors, whose terms, by the foresight of Bismarck, had been generous. She had been displaced in Germany, but she had paid no indemnity and had lost no territory. Her wounds, unlike those of France, were healing without a scar. There had arisen in Austria a statesman of great ability in the person of Julius Andrassy. Andrassy was a Hungarian who had been exiled for his part in the defeated revolution of 1848. He had been allowed to return after ten years in Paris, had gained the ear of Francis Joseph, and after the terrible defeat of the Austrian armies in Bohemia he had written and secured the adoption of the

present remarkable constitution of the dual monarchy, which distributes the national power between the Magyars and the Germans, to the practical exclusion of the Slavic elements in the population. Andrassy constantly argued that the future of Austria lay in the East, and that her expulsion from Italy and Germany had been real blessings in disguise.

Under these circumstances the three emperors met in Berlin the year after the defeat of France, and made an informal league in which they agreed to work together to repress the revolutionary movements in Europe, to maintain the new conquests of Germany, and to settle the problems which might arise in the Balkans.

Bismarck saw at once the weak point in this agreement. The three emperors were at one in their common fear of Socialism and Revolution; they might even help him to hold Alsace and Lorraine. But the Russian and the Austrian could not both dominate the Balkans at the same time. It never occurred to any one that the course of true statesmanship, in the long run, would be to leave the Balkans to their own peoples without any outside domination. Did the Iron Chancellor really expect to be able to drive this strange and unruly team in safety over the rough road of imperial rivalry? Was the league hollow from the very beginning, and had Bismarck already chosen one of the partners for his especial favor? These are questions which we cannot answer. But it is now well known that in 1875, at the time of the mysterious war scare of that year, and again twice in 1876, when Alexander was seeking the assurance of a free hand against Turkey, Bismarck offered support to Russia in return for a guarantee of Alsace and Lorraine. Russia was virtually told that she might have the aid of Prussia if she would consent to abandon France.

Did Bismarck intend these offers sincerely? Did he ever

expect them to be considered or accepted, even at the cost of Austria? One would be bold, indeed, to answer at all dogmatically. But it seems very probable that he expected Alexander to refuse, at least when the offer was repeated the second and the third time. He wanted the friendship of both Austria and Russia, but when he had to choose, he definitely and very early chose Austria. William was always sincerely friendly to Russia. He had meant what he said when he had written to Alexander after the war with France: "Prussia will never forget that she owes it to you that the war did not assume the most extreme dimensions. May God bless you for it!" Bismarck needed to prove to his master, and perhaps even to himself, that the friendship of Russia was a broken reed. Russia would never allow France to be completely crushed. And so, in 1877, Bismarck allowed it to be known that Prussia would fight on the side of Austria if necessary. From that moment, at least, the so-called League of the Three Emperors was a hollow sham which needed nothing but a sharp crisis to sweep it away. It rested on nothing more substantial than the personal friendship of two monarchs. The chancellor had taken the Czar of all the Russias on an imperial snipe-hunt and left him holding the sack. This is the real key to the policy of Bismarck at the Congress of Berlin.[1]

Why did Bismarck choose Austria instead of Russia for his ally? He recognized the potential power of a great empire like Russia. He felt genuine sympathy for her absolute government. The two states had a common interest in their respective shares of dismembered Poland. But, in spite of the possible friction on account of the religious question, there were more points of contact with Austria. The

[1] For a recent and somewhat different interpretation, see Coolidge, "The Origins of the Triple Alliance."

dominant part of the Austrian population was German, and would be bound to Germany by the strong bonds of kinship and of language. In Hungary, Bismarck could count on the Magyars even more certainly, on account of their fear of the Slavs by whom they were surrounded. The alliance with Russia depended too much on a single pair of eyes; it was as uncertain as the changing moods of the Czar. With prophetic insight, Bismarck foresaw the dangerous instability of that alliance, and so finally chose Austria. Events seem to have proved the wisdom of the choice. It was in this connection that he said: "All contracts between great states cease to be unconditionally binding as soon as they are tested by the struggle for existence." When he went to Vienna to make the formal alliance with Austria, he was received with great enthusiasm by the crowds, and felt that the German sympathies of the Austrians "had been overlaid but not extinguished by the débris deposited by the struggles of the past" (1879).

At the time of which we are speaking, just before the outbreak of the war between Russia and Turkey, a very remarkable old man of seventy had just achieved the ambition for which he had worked since he was a youth of twenty-two. Benjamin Disraeli had become at last the prime minister of England. The rise of Disraeli to power illustrates one of the fundamental weaknesses of the parliamentary form of government. Modern constitutional governments are of one of two kinds. They are either Presidential, like that of the United States, in which the executive holds office directly from the people for a given term of years, or Parliamentary, in which the executive power is entrusted to a committee of the Legislature for an indefinite length of time. In ordinary times the committee scheme works well enough, and certainly has the advantage of flexibility. There is small chance

for a dictatorship. But in times of emergency there is almost always friction and waste of time and energy. Men are debating when they should be acting, and the constant necessity of appealing to Parliament tends to bring to power men who are first of all great debaters and clever parliamentary tacticians. Especially before the days of the last Reform Bill, a man might easily dominate the House of Commons without really understanding either his own country or the affairs of Europe. The appeal which will win the ear of the House is not necessarily the broad, generous appeal which will be sanctioned by the people.

Disraeli understood the House individually and collectively better, perhaps, than any man since Chatham. A keen observer has said that he "played upon it as he would have played upon a musical instrument, and it answered to his touch." When he appeared for his first speech he was described as attired in "a bottle-green frock coat and a vest of white, the front of which exhibited a network of glittering chains; large fancy pattern pantaloons, and a black tie, above which no shirt collar was visible." His face was very pale, in sharp contrast to his coal-black eyes. His forehead was broad and low, overhung with clustering ringlets of coal-black hair. The fastidious House received this strange speaker with shouts of laughter. At last he paused in the midst of a sentence, and looking indignantly at his opponents, raised his hands and shouted, "I have begun several times many things, and I have often succeeded at last; ay, sir, and though I sit down now, the time will come when you will hear me." And the time did come. Disraeli could sit for hours listening to the most bitter denunciation of himself and his policies without a change in a muscle of his face, showing only by an occasional gleam of his half-shut eyes that he heard what was said. O'Connell once called him "a

miscreant, a wretch, a liar whose life is a living lie; the heir at law of the blasphemous thief who died impenitent on the cross!" But the House came to admire a man who could meet such blows without wincing. The instinct of fair play, admiration for his astonishing cleverness in debate, the tendency to appraise a man at his own valuation, had much to do with Disraeli's rise to power.

The very frankness of his cynicism, the mere honesty of his ambitions, had in them a certain refreshing quality. On one occasion he said to John Bright as the two took their umbrellas in the cloak-room, "After all, what is it that brings you and me here? Fame! I might have occupied a literary throne, but I have renounced it for this career. This is the true arena."[1] And in his quest for fame, he knew how to be generous to his friends and dangerous to his enemies. He had at once the aloofness and the supreme courage and perseverance of his race. Men always admire a man who does not fear them, and who rises supreme above all obstacles to the place which he has chosen for himself, who meets contempt with still deeper contempt, and who looks disaster in the face with a smile. Such a man was Benjamin Disraeli.

Like Chatham, Disraeli was always something of an actor. In one of his novels he represents the hero explaining to his father why he had left college: "Because they taught me words, and I wished to learn ideas." The father answers with worldly wisdom, "Few ideas are correct ones, and what are correct no one can ascertain, but with words we govern men." Disraeli always acted on this principle, and used words to conceal his meaning. In one speech, when hard pressed by a questioner, he said that he was "in favor of popular privileges, but opposed to democratic rights."

[1] Bryce, "Biographical Studies," p. 30.

After his return from the Congress of Berlin, which had torn away some of the richest provinces of the Turkish empire, he said that the purpose of the powers had been "not dismemberment, but consolidation." But when the Greeks tried the same sovereign method of "consolidation" for the growing ills of Turkey, Disraeli saw to it that they were compelled to stop in their purpose of conquest.

He became the leader of his party at the time when Peel accepted the doctrine of free trade, "stealing the clothes of the Liberals when they were in bathing," as Disraeli said. Later he had done much the same thing himself when he became the sponsor of the Reform Bill of 1867, which the Liberals had long been urging without success. This bill gave the suffrage to the workingmen in the cities. Many thought that it sounded the knell of the Conservative party. But the Tory leader saw, with characteristic shrewdness, that if a reform bill had to be passed, it was better to be the victor than the defeated party. The workingmen could be held by constant appeals to their patriotism.

At last the supreme political opportunity came when Gladstone pursued a peaceful policy in foreign affairs. The Liberal prime minister submitted the *Alabama* controversy to arbitration, much to the disgust of the Tories; and when the court decided the case against England and imposed a penalty of $15,000,000, he defended his action in words which are still memorable: "Although I may think the sentence was harsh in its extent and unjust in its basis, I regard the fine imposed on this country as dust in the balance compared with the moral value of the example set when these two great nations of England and America went in peace and concord before a judicial tribunal rather than resort to the arbitrament of the sword." But for the moment passions were inflamed, and the English people were disappointed,

and Disraeli became prime minister in 1874 on a platform in which he promised to uphold the ancient monarchy of England, to elevate the social condition of the people, and above all to maintain the empire. It does sometimes seem, as Disraeli had said, that men are governed by words. The new government was sure to have what is called a strong foreign policy.

The prime minister had been especially interested in the East ever since he had travelled in the eastern Mediterranean as a young man. He loved to speak of England as an Asiatic power. He had a genuine and often expressed admiration for the Turks, as was only natural since their treatment of the Jews had been better than of any other of the subject races, and since their treatment by Russia has always been a blot on the Russian name. He had no real knowledge of conditions in southeastern Europe, where the Christian populations were suffering under the most oppressive tyranny, with heavy taxes and no semblance of personal or religious liberty. The prime minister always posed as a wizard whose statements concealed some weighty plan which he was not quite at liberty to disclose. He wished to be thought inscrutable. Beneath his picture at the Conservative Club was written the line of Homer, "He alone is wise; all the rest are fleeting shadows." He loved dramatic surprises, and understood their political value. The year after his accession, a lucky chance gave him the very opportunity which he needed. The Suez Canal had been completed in 1869—by a curious coincidence, the same year with the completion of the first transcontinental railroad in the United States. It had been built under a hundred-year concession to a French company, and the Khedive of Egypt had received 176,000 of the 400,000 shares as his reward. Egypt had prospered as long as the war lasted in the United States.

She had sold her cotton at fabulous prices, and the rich planters in the valley of the Nile had even been able to afford expensive and beautiful Abyssinian and Circassian wives. The debt of the little state had risen thirty times in five years, for the Khedive thought that the good times would last forever. Then the war had ended, and within ten years Egypt had lost her cotton business and was at the doors of bankruptcy. One realizes how closely connected are all historical events when we think that the English possession of the Suez Canal and of Egypt is a by-product of the American Civil War. An enterprising English newspaperman learned that the ruler of Egypt was about to sell his shares to the French. He came one night to Lord Derby, foreign minister in the cabinet of Disraeli, and urged him to buy them for England. It was a startling suggestion to the cautious Derby. Parliament was not in session. No money had been appropriated for such a purpose. But he promised to take the matter up with the prime minister. Disraeli telegraphed at once and asked the consul at Cairo to inquire directly whether the shares were in the market. The Khedive answered, "Yes." Disraeli secured the necessary money from an English banker, and before night the bargain was completed. When Parliament met he could announce that England had acquired a controlling interest in the Suez Canal for £4,000,000 sterling. To-day those shares are paying twenty-five per cent. on the original investment, and are quoted at £30,000,000, but of course they are really priceless.

Only two other men could ever claim to have picked up such bargains at the remnant counter of the world. The first was Livingston, into whose feeble hands Napoleon thrust the half-welcome Louisiana, with its area of boundless wealth, for $15,000,000; and the second was Seward, to whom Alexander of Russia had just sold Alaska for the

paltry sum of $7,200,000. The mystery man had proved a wizard.

His next move was equally characteristic. On January 1, 1877, Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India, amid booming cannon and shouting crowds at a great durbar in the city of a hundred kings, under the massive walls of imperial Delhi. But imperialism has its gloomy side, and famine was at that moment stalking on her grim business among the villages of the land of the five rivers. To a starving people all the pomp of Delhi seemed only a pale and hollow sham.

In Europe the eyes of men were on the Balkans. Fierce revolt against intolerable misrule had blazed up slowly in Bosnia, at the extreme west of the dominions of the Sultan. Did Bismarck and Andrassy, or did the Pan-Slavists of Moscow, have anything directly to do with the revolt? We shall not know until the archives are fully opened. In any case, there was reason enough for the revolt without any outside assistance, and it might be made to serve either Austria or Russia, and perhaps, for the moment, both. The powers listened to the appeals which came to them out of the East and made half-hearted efforts to secure a measure of redress for the oppressed peoples of the Balkans. First came the Andrassy note, in which all the powers joined; then a note from the three emperors at Berlin, which the British Government refused to support. The threat of Europe was that if the Sultan refused to come to terms they would deliberate again. The result was what one might expect. The Sultan, encouraged by the attitude of the powers, and remembering especially the very present help in time of trouble which had come to him in the days of the Crimean war, assumed more and more an air of injured innocence. Especially after a palace revolution had driven the weak Abdul Aziz from the

throne to suicide, and when the imbecile boy Murad was in turn succeeded by his utterly cruel brother, Abdul Hamid, the chances for any internal reform were clearly gone, though Disraeli would not believe it. Then Servia and Montenegro declared war and fought with the greatest courage under a Russian general. But the odds were too great, and they were beaten hopelessly, and saved from annihilation only by the action of the powers.

One spring morning in 1876, the papers published a story of terrible atrocities among the villages of Bulgaria. The Turk was protecting his flank against any sudden attack. And he was doing it with almost modern thoroughness and efficiency. This was the despatch which the people of the world read over their coffee that morning: "In Constantinople nobody hesitates to believe that many thousands of innocent men, women, and children have been slaughtered; that at least sixty villages have been utterly destroyed; that the most terrible acts of violence have been committed; and that a district among the most fertile in Europe has been ruined for many years to come." The villagers had been invited to give up their arms on promise of immunity, and had then been slaughtered in cold blood. Twelve hundred had been burned to death in one church. It was a great massacre,—not Abdul Hamid's masterpiece, for in the Armenian massacres of 1896 the most conservative accounts place the deaths at 100,000, but still, so near to a critical Europe, quite satisfactory for the purpose in hand. Disraeli was politely incredulous, even after the worst details had been confirmed by his own agents. He labelled all this talk, "Coffee-house babble," and said on the floor of the House, in answer to a question, that the stories could not be true. He knew the East, and Eastern people did not torture their victims. They used more expeditious means. He was evidently pleased at the laugh which this sally brought out.

Sir Henry Elliot, the British ambassador at Constantinople, telegraphed: "British interests are not concerned in the question whether ten or twenty thousand perished in the insurrection."

But this was not the heart of England speaking. I believe it is always true that if secret diplomacy could be abolished, and the essential truth in any international situation could be presented fairly to any great people without deception, they would always answer for the generous policy, against the narrow claims of self-interest. The difficulty is to avoid deception, and to keep the subject before them until they can express their will in action. At least it was so in this case. Gladstone emerged from his literary retirement with his "Bulgarian Pamphlet," which fired the heart of the common people of England and made it impossible for the cabinet to intervene at once in favor of Turkey against Russia, as they had done at the time of the Crimean war. He addressed great crowds everywhere. The historian Freeman expressed the liberal thought of the country when he said, "Perish the interests of England, perish our dominion in India, sooner than that we should strike one blow or speak one word on behalf of the wrong against the right." Gladstone knew that he would be voted down in the House of Commons, that even some of his own party were against him, "but he looked beyond unity to principle, and beyond the House of Commons to the nation." He presented resolutions in which he declared that Turkey had lost her right of assistance, moral or material; he pronounced for local self-government in the disturbed provinces, and urged the imposition of guarantees by the Concert of Europe. Gladstone's speech in defence of these resolutions was probably the climax of a great career.[1] His opponents had used dilatory tactics, so that he did not manage to secure the floor until seven

[1] Morley's "Gladstone," II, 566.

in the evening. He rose to speak before a listless House whose members were streaming out to dinner. But he held them and moved them, and what was more, he gained the ear of the country, so that any repetition of the blunders of the Crimean war was now impossible. The old man was now sixty-eight, but he spoke for two hours and a half with undiminished vigor: "Sir, there were other days when England was the hope of freedom. Wherever in the world a high aspiration was entertained, or a noble blow was struck, it was to England that the eyes of the oppressed were always turned. . . . You talk to me of the established tradition and policy in regard to Turkey. I appeal to an established tradition older, wider, nobler far—a tradition not which disregards British interests, but which teaches you to seek the promotion of these interests in obeying the dictates of honor and justice." He went on to describe in passionate but restrained language the wrongs against which he was protesting. "I believe, for one, that the knell of Turkish tyranny in these provinces has sounded. . . . The destruction may not come in the way or by the means that we should choose; but come this boon from what hands it may, it will be a noble boon, and as a noble boon will gladly be accepted by Christendom and the world." The twelve thousand Bulgarian peasants who had died defenceless in their villages had unwittingly performed a greater task for their country than if they had died armed upon the field of battle. Even Disraeli could not quite laugh Gladstone down when he called him "a sophistical rhetorician inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity."

The Bulgarian massacres had made war between Russia and Turkey practically inevitable, though events moved slowly, and it was clear that Alexander did not want the war and would have been perfectly satisfied if the powers had

taken from his shoulders the task of improving the conditions in Turkey. He remembered well the results of the Crimean war, and he knew that Russia was no more ready now than then. Her financial condition was alarming, and with each new conquest in Central Asia her deficits increased. She had sold Alaska for this reason and because she feared that it might fall into the hands of England. Her army had been reorganized two years before by the adoption of the system of universal military service, but it was too early yet to reap the fruits of this change. Above all, Austria was watching from the heights of the Carpathians, and the British fleet was near the mouth of the Dardanelles. But the pressure of the Russian people, and his own sympathies, were too strong to permit a policy of inaction in the face of almost certain continuation of the massacres. He sought an interview with Francis Joseph, and promised not to oppose him in his evident desire for Bosnia. He gave his word of honor to the English minister that he would not seize Constantinople. He made an agreement which was virtually an alliance with Roumania. And then he waited with remarkable patience for the result of the conference of the powers which had been called to meet in Constantinople. The Sultan promised to introduce a parliament into the government of Turkey, and one actually met with all the usual features except the important one of an opposition. Abdul Hamid expressed surprise that the powers did not recognize "the principles of equality and justice which the imperial government was seeking to introduce into its internal administration." It was evident that all hope of a peaceful solution was at an end, and the soldiers of Russia moved south across Roumania on what has been rightly called the most just and necessary war of the nineteenth century.

Again, as in the previous war, the peasant soldiers fought

with supreme courage and devotion. There can be no question that they saw in the Bulgarian peasants brothers whom they were sent to save. For once the other nations of the Balkans laid aside their petty jealousies, and the Servians reëntered the war and rendered valiant service side by side with the Russians and the Roumanians. The Russians crossed the Danube at Sistova. Their commander stood on an island in the river watching them as they stormed the lofty southern bank. Skobeleff, the hero of the Russian advance into Central Asia, stood beside him as he peered out through the mist of the early morning. "I congratulate you on your victory," he said to Dragomiroff. "Where do you see that?" asked Dragomiroff. "Where? On the faces of your soldiers. Watch them as they charge the enemy!"[1] But, in spite of courage, the war was long and costly, and proved again the complete inefficiency of the administrative system of the Russian Empire. At length Plevna had yielded to Todleben, the hero of Sevastopol, and the Russian cavalry swept down through the passes of the lofty Balkans on Adrianople, just as the soldiers of Nicholas had done fifty years before. With the fall of Plevna, Disraeli's fears for Constantinople were redoubled. But England had no soldiers at hand. "How long will it take to reach Adrianople?" he asked his military adviser. "About four weeks," was the answer. "Give me six and I can do something." As it was, the English fleet sailed into the Sea of Marmora as the Russian soldiers approached the walls of the long-coveted city. Bismarck said the world was likely to see a war between a whale and an elephant.

The Czar imposed peace upon the beaten Sultan under the walls of his capital. This was the famous treaty of San Stefano, which has been called the wisest plan for the solu-

[1] Rose, "The Development of European Nations," p. 234.

tion of the Eastern Question that has ever been devised. The Sultan agreed to make Bulgaria an independent state which should stretch from the Black Sea to the boundaries of Albania, and from the Danube to the Ægean. Servia was to be given the districts of Nish and Novibazar, and little Montenegro was to have a port on the Adriatic. Russia was to have an indemnity and to annex the regions in Armenia which she had conquered from the Turks. There was only one serious injustice in the treaty—that Roumania was to give up to Russia the desirable land which she held north of the Danube and accept instead the marshy and undesirable Dobrudja. This was poor return for valiant aid. The Servian ambitions were also sacrificed to the necessity of giving unwilling Bosnia to the undeserving Austrian. The other arrangements of the treaty were based on the best information then available, and seemed likely to secure as just and abiding a peace as could reasonably be hoped.

Austria and England immediately objected, fearing too great Russian influence in the Balkans, and a congress of the powers was called to meet at Berlin, under the presidency of Bismarck, to reconsider the terms of the treaty. The Congress of Berlin met, therefore, to compel the victorious power to yield the fruit of victory to outsiders who had had no part in the contest. In that respect it was different from any congress in the history of the world, and was the high-water mark of the Concert of Nations. It suggests the extent to which a united world may succeed against any single member. In this case, it is true, the common bond was certainly one of organized selfishness. In some later congress we may hope that the same method may be used for wiser and more generous purposes.

In contrast with the previous congress, each of the states was represented by its ablest men. There may have been an

exception in the case of Turkey, which was represented, at least according to Bismarck, "by an imbecile, a renegade, and a Greek," but that made little difference, for even the ablest diplomacy would scarcely have served to save her from her friends. Herbert Paul has said that "if Disraeli, now Lord Beaconsfield, had been the envoy of the Sultan instead of the Queen, he would have deserved a gold statue for his labors at Berlin." But to dismembered Turkey even this praise would doubtless seem too generous. The chief representative of Russia was the aged Gortchakoff, now more than eighty years of age, who had to be carried in to the sittings of the congress, but whose mental vigor was unimpaired. His former friendship with Bismarck had changed to hatred when Russia had averted the possibility of a great war in 1875, and Gortchakoff had claimed all the credit in the famous message, "Peace is now assured." Andrassy, the Hungarian, was a striking figure, with his coal-black hair and eyes, set off by a scarlet uniform. He spent his leisure time at Berlin in driving a hard bargain with little Servia, which practically delivered the railroads of that country into the hands of Austria.

In this congress there was little of social pomp, and it is said that the people of Berlin scarcely knew that anything unusual was going on. The meetings were businesslike sessions in which Bismarck, whose health was none too good, pushed matters along as rapidly as possible. His brusqueness, good humor, and rough tact helped to soften the differences which arose, or else to sweep them aside. He tells us that he had to drink a jug of port before the meetings to keep himself alert, and the other members did not hesitate to take advantage of the famous hospitality of his buffet.

Most of these heated discussions were sham battles, for Disraeli came to the congress armed with three secret agree-

ments which really settled all the essential points at issue in his favor. He had one with Russia, in which that reluctant power had agreed to the division of Bulgaria into three parts, Macedonia to be left to the tender mercies of the Sultan. He had another with Turkey, in which that state promised to reward the services of England by the cession of Cyprus and by accepting England as the protector of her Asiatic territory. He also had one with Austria, in which he agreed to let her take Bosnia, for Beaconsfield did not realize that he was building up a new rival to replace the old. With these three papers in his pocket, it is perfectly plain that the astute old gentleman was playing with loaded dice; but he was enough of an actor to keep up the appearance of the greatest fervor over questions which he knew perfectly well were already settled. On one occasion he even ordered a special train to be in readiness to take him away if he did not gain a really unimportant point for which he was contending. He had an eye always upon the crowds at home and the necessity of making them feel that he was winning famous diplomatic victories. He had one moment of embarrassment, for a dishonest clerk carried his agreement with Turkey, which ceded Cyprus to England, to one of the newspapers, and it was published just before a great reception for the congress. Disraeli arrived late at the reception, and passed from group to group with the same inscrutable expression. The various diplomats were very angry, especially the Russians, who felt that they had been duped. A Russian princess finally had the courage to ask, "What are you thinking about, my lord?" (All the rest were thinking of Cyprus.) "Madam," answered the old man, with a courtly bow, "I am not thinking of anything; I am enjoying myself." [1]

[1] Princess Radziwill, "My Recollections," p. 149.

"Punch" represented the English prime minister in those days, "arriving with a large military escort, keeping an iron-clad on the Spree, attending with cocked hat, brass band, and revolvers, entering singing, 'We don't want to fight, but by jingo, if we do,' drawing caricatures of the Emperor of Russia on the blotting-paper, and waving the Union Jack continually over the head of the President." [1] And, spiritually, there was a certain degree of truth in these pictures; but, outwardly, Beaconsfield was a master of diplomacy. Those who were there agree that he spoke seldom and always to the point, knew what he wanted, and never wavered even when his demands led straight to war. Bismarck said with his usual bluntness, "Der alte Jude, das ist der mann!" [2] There was real spiritual kinship between those two remarkable old men.

What was going on behind the scenes of this assembly? It is very probable that whatever it was counted fully as much in the final result as anything which took place at the more formal meetings around Bismarck's table. It is at least certain that a great deal of generosity was displayed in offering other people's property. It was Bismarck's evident policy to sow as much discord as possible among all his potential rivals. He certainly joined with Salisbury in urging France to seize Tunis, greatly coveted by Italy, thereby laying sure foundations for the future Triple Alliance. In the same spirit, he urged England to proceed with the occupation of Egypt, a step which would certainly cause friction with France, thereby isolating his chief enemy from her two possible friends, Italy and England. Salisbury probably suggested to Italy the step which was accomplished only

[1] Lord, "The Congress of Berlin," p. 55.
[2] Bryce, "Biographical Studies," p. 54.

yesterday, the occupation of Tripoli. When Disraeli addressed the waiting crowds from the window of Whitehall on his return to London, he told them, in famous though borrowed phrase, that he was bringing them "Peace, with honor"! It seems that he might better have summed up the spirit of the assembly in which he had played so prominent a part if he had said that he brought them "Peace, with Cyprus"!

What shall we say of the final results of this congress of great men? The affairs of the Balkans and of the East might be settled in either of two ways, to meet the immediate needs and prejudices of the great powers, or to secure the lasting good of the people who lived in the stricken territory. They chose the first rather than the second. The representatives of the people most concerned were not made members of the congress and were listened to only as petitioners, and that with thinly disguised contempt. Russia, England, and Austria each received its pound of flesh, but in the unnatural division of Servia and Bulgaria a smouldering fire had been kindled which was to leap into flame in 1912 and 1913, and finally to sweep the whole world in the mighty conflagration of to-day. Much, very much, of the guilt of the present war goes back to those men who sat around Bismarck's table, and who signed the most selfish and irrational treaty in recent history on that fateful thirteenth of July, 1878. Two years later the old man who was the chief author of its most important provisions was to retire from the stage on which he had played so great a part, saying to his colleagues, "You will come back, but I shall not." The next year he was dead.

One may fitly close this account of the three great peace congresses of the nineteenth century with the words of the

historian John Richard Green: "The sympathies of peoples with peoples, the sense of a common humanity between nations, the aspirations of nationalities after freedom and independence, are, after all, real political forces which true statesmanship must finally take into account."

ROBERT GRANVILLE CALDWELL.